

# From AI readiness to ecosystem competition: Why dataspace are the Internet moment for your data – IAV’s “enterprise dataspace”

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*“To do what has been so successful in the past is always the **wrong thing**; and to do more of it is to be **doubly wrong**”* — Peter F. Drucker (1974)

## Executive summary: What’s changed and why it matters

**Peter Drucker** remains vital in today’s AI-driven landscape. Beyond recent tributes (e.g., Bill Gates; CGU 2025), his legacy of guiding executives through rapid shifts—from the Cold War to the space race to personal computing—resulted in practical recipes for leading both **“in the today”** and **“in the tomorrow”** (Drucker 1980, 1999) with **customer centricity** as the core principle (1954). In today’s shift to AI, the true bottleneck is no longer algorithms or chips, but data: without quality information, no system produces trustworthy results. The pivotal question is now: “Is your company’s data ready for generative AI?” (Davenport & Tiwari 2024). Emerging **Web3-oriented decentralized dataspace technology** addresses this readiness (Guggenberger et al. 2025) and enables **ecosystem competition**. This evolves value creation from rather linear chains to **collaborative networks** that pool shared resources and data—fostering greater **innovation, scalability, and resilience** than any individual firm can achieve alone (Adner 2017). Early data ecosystems like **Catena-X** demonstrate how this tech facilitates cross-company data chains and **“truthful” digital twins** (Schlueter Langdon 2024), allowing partners to share data without surrendering IP. However, dataspace do not automatically fix quality; that requires rigorous investment in **governance, metadata, provenance**, and continuous enrichment. IAV serves as a first-mover case by applying dataspace technology **“inside out.”** This **“enterprise dataspace”** bridges internal silos to complement centralized AI approaches. IAV’s strategy exemplifies Drucker’s success factors: managing today and tomorrow in parallel, starting with the right decentralized tech, treating data as a **core managed product rather than an afterthought** (Crosby & Schlueter Langdon 2019), and laying the foundation upon which to build **customer-value-defined** solutions and applications.

## The AI–data–readiness imperative

Drucker famously described data as the **“ore”** from which information needs to be extracted (Drucker 1992). Today, that metaphor captures the core challenge: even the fastest GPUs and most sophisticated models are useless if the underlying data is incomplete, biased, or locked away. **No cats in the training set, no cats in the AI-results**; only black cats in the training set, only black-cat outputs. Most enterprises run dozens or hundreds of core systems (ERP, PLM, MES, CRM, supplier portals, service platforms) each optimized for its own purpose rather than for cross-company analytics or AI. The result is technically fragmented, organizationally guarded, and legally sensitive **silos**, even in otherwise “digitally advanced” firms. Worse for any **CDO**,

internal data alone is not enough. Drucker early on emphasized the need for **“data chains” across companies**: to optimize costs and maximize yields, a firm must understand “the costs of its entire economic chain”—suppliers, distributors, and partners viewed as one system (Drucker 1995). Today, the same logic underpins the quest for digital twins. If an OEM contributes roughly 20 percent of the value of the final product, it needs the remaining 80 percent of relevant data from its supply chain to avoid “fake news” and build a **“truthful” digital twin** that behaves accurately in engineering simulations (Schlueter Langdon 2024). Then as now, the key impediment is information sharing across organizations, and “even within the same company, people tend to resist information sharing” (Drucker 1995). Legal constraints, competitive sensitivities, and legacy IT architectures reinforce this resistance, creating a widening gap.

## The dataspace decentralization difference: Internet lessons

Dataspace technology has emerged as a response to the AI–data–readiness gap. It builds on well-established mechanisms through which IT creates value in inter-firm partnerships (Saraf et al. 2007, 2013). From a **CTO perspective**, a dataspace is a peer-to-peer infrastructure for secure, sovereign data transactions with built-in intellectual property (IP) and usage-rights protection, sitting on top of existing cloud and on-premise systems and networks (Guggenberger et al. 2025). From a **CEO perspective**, it is an evolution of the web stack toward what is often called “Web3”: instead of centralizing data in one big database, lake, or platform, it **federates access to data where it resides**, under the control of those who own or steward it (McKinsey 2023; Schlueter Langdon 2025b). Each party decides which data products to expose, to whom, under which contract, and for what purpose. Today’s **C-suite challenge** is recognizing its potential. Early deployments often focus on **“better, cheaper file transfer,”** mirroring the early Web1 era when the Internet was seen merely as a tool for **“better, cheaper messaging”** or email (Schlueter Langdon 2003). Few then anticipated that this same infrastructure would enable **e-commerce** and create the world’s first **trillion-dollar firms**.

## Scaling from platform to ecosystem competition

For decades, business strategy debates have centered on platforms, that is, two sided or multi-sided markets where a central orchestrator connects users and producers (Rochet & Tirole 2003). Many of today’s largest firms, from e-commerce giants like Amazon to consumer electronics makers like Apple, are at their core platform businesses (Van Alstyne et al. 2016). Yet ever faster digital innovation, expanding technology options, and product development at “China speed” are shifting competitive dynamics. Heeding Drucker’s advice that “the greatest danger [...] is to act [and double down] with yesterday’s logic” in turbulent times (Drucker 1980), pioneer companies are starting to create value together with other actors, including competitors, by **competing in ecosystems** rather than through stand alone platforms, creating value that no single firm could deliver alone (Moore 1993; Adner 2017). The auto industry already offers leading examples:

- Automakers co-develop AI-based features using foundation models provided by potential competitors.
- European OEMs co-produce vehicles with Chinese partners for the Chinese market, while Chinese EVs enter Europe through joint ventures.
- Car companies integrate infotainment from Google or Apple, even though they compete for customer attention.

Ecosystem co-creation requires sharing data across firm boundaries while maintaining IP protection. So far, spreadsheets and point-to-point integrations have been the default, cumbersome to set up, costly to maintain, and impossible to scale beyond a handful of partners. This is where dataspace technology is emerging as a game changer: it closes the **scalability gap** by providing a standardised, sovereign way to transact data with many partners. In effect, it turns

cross-organisational data sharing from a bespoke integration problem into repeatable, scalable infrastructure. At scale, dataspace do for data what Henry Ford’s moving assembly line did for cars, shifting from artisanal work to mass production and adoption (Womack et al. 1990).

## IAV’s “dataspace inside” transformation example

IAV is a leading German engineering partner to the automotive industry, with Volkswagen as its largest shareholder and a strong position in software-defined-vehicle (SDV) development and advanced mobility solutions. Clients expect IAV not only to understand the latest technologies, but to embody them in its own operations. Faced with how to become AI-ready without rebuilding its entire IT landscape, IAV chose a path that closely follows Drucker’s practical guidelines.

### 1. “Tomorrow is made today” (Drucker 1980) – start now on the right foundation

Rather than waiting for a perfect future architecture, IAV acted on Drucker’s principle that tomorrow is created by today’s decisions and that change should be treated as an opportunity rather than a threat (Drucker 2004). The point was not just to start, but to start in the right direction: building on a **decentralised foundation** based on open standards, similar in spirit to the Internet, and therefore, with inherent resilience and scalability. Concretely, IAV subscribed to a Dataspace-as-a-Service (DaaS) layer provided by T-Systems, built on the same open-source Eclipse Tractus-X stack that underpins the Catena-X ecosystem.

### 2. Customer centricity (Drucker 1954) – start from a business problem and show results fast

True to Drucker’s view that results begin with customers (Drucker 1954), IAV did not start with technology for its own sake. The first use cases focused on concrete business problems that required combining data from multiple sources with different IP and usage-rights constraints. IAV effectively turned DaaS “inside out” by implementing it as an **internal enterprise dataspace** to connect selected domains and expose governed data products for software-defined-vehicle analytics, sustainability use cases, and AI. In line with its results-driven approach, these capabilities were quickly showcased as a world premiere at CES 2025 (Schlueter Langdon 2025b).

### 3. “Doing the right things” (Drucker 1963) – reuse what exists and focus on differentiation

Drucker urged leaders to focus on “doing the right things” before “doing them right” and warned against wasting resources on activities others can do just as well (Drucker 1963). Thus, IAV outsourced dataspace infrastructure to T-Systems—a data-sovereignty expert with global reach—via a ready-to-use, SLA-backed DaaS product, freeing talent to create unique value from domain expertise: new data assets and products (Crosby & Schlueter Langdon 2019) as well as client-specific applications atop the network. This strategy echoes Drucker’s (1967) observation that economic value lies in applications (the “appliances”) rather than the infrastructure (the “power plant”). Consequently, IAV adapts the service for enterprise needs, letting internal departments act as governed participants under central control. Internally, this dataspace acts as a neutral fabric, unifying siloed, heterogeneous data sources into a governed environment that **unlocks “composite value”** for clients. While this transformation is still in progress, it earned IAV’s CDO/CIO, Saskia Kohlhaas, the **“CIO of the Year”** award for SMEs. For other firms, the lesson is clear and consistent with Drucker: do not wait for a perfect system that will never arrive. Put a decentralized, standards-based dataspace foundation in place now, anchor it in real customer problems with fast, visible results, and focus your scarce talent on the differentiating data products and applications that will define your role in future AI and data ecosystems.

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